



**Testimony for the  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
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March 2, 2023**

On behalf of Albertus Magnus College, I am submitting testimony on Section 12 of [S.B. 982: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION](#) which seeks to make permanent our institution's exemption from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education, without a cap on the number of programs we may introduce without approval.

By way of background, non-profit, private colleges that are regionally accredited and maintain certain standards have been exempt from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education in some form since 2016. At times, there have been caps on the number of programs that an institution which is exempt may introduce but for the last two years, eligible institutions have had no cap on the number of new programs we may introduce. This bill seeks to make permanent that existing policy.

Connecticut is one of only a handful of states that require private, non-profit colleges to seek state approval for its new programs. It is the **ONLY** state in the country that requires program approval for private colleges and not public colleges.

It is important that Albertus Magnus College is provided the flexibility to offer new programs without oversight to be responsive to the state's workforce needs. During the years in which the exemption has been in place, Albertus has worked closely with state agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Social Services and industry associations such as the Connecticut Business and Industry Association to develop programs that contribute to the community, including Masters programs in Public Administration and Clinical Mental Health Counselling; and undergraduate programs in cybersecurity, supply chain management, general health sciences, and social media communications, to name a few. These programs would have taken approximately twelve months longer to bring on line had the College been required to go through the program approval process. Instead, the College has improved its ability to meet societal needs and capacity to invest in the development of additional programs in high-demand fields.

Albertus has seen no impact on student outcomes with our exemption from program approval. Of note, for the past five years, over 95% of Albertus graduates have been employed or were attending graduate school six months following graduation, far above the national average of 86%.

Policymakers may have consumer protection concerns about this issue, given recent news related to the sudden closure of a for-profit institution in our state. It is important to understand that this statutory provision for exemption requires institutions to be regionally accredited. Accredited colleges and

universities undergo regular review as part of the New England Commission on Higher Education's (NECHE) rigorous accreditation process. Assessment plans must be in place for individual programs, and institutions must show that they are engaged in processes of continuous improvement, have the appropriate financial resources in place to support their programs, and are meeting reasonable benchmarks for student retention and success. Albertus Magnus College has in place a strong, well-conceived internal review process for vetting proposed new academic programs. New programs are submitted for review by an Academic Policy Committee composed of faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Committee makes recommendations for program adoption to the Faculty Assembly, a body of the faculty as a whole, which in turn makes recommendations to the administration and the Board of Trustees. Program proposals must include a market analysis, a financial analysis that includes resource and revenue projections, the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and an assessment plan. The College has engaged the services of EAB, a higher education research firm, to assist in market analysis. Failing to implement the governor's proposal and returning to the former review process would add an unnecessary bureaucratic layer that would not contribute to the quality of colleges' and universities' academic programs but would incur unnecessary costs and slow the process of program development and implementation.

It is important that higher education institutions are able to efficiently and effectively develop and implement innovative programming in a timely manner given the swiftly changing government and industry landscape that has resulted most notably from technological innovation. In so doing, our institutions play a vital role in securing the future of Connecticut. Albertus Magnus College prides itself for offering a liberal arts-based education that serves as a strong foundation for life-long learning while at the same time preparing students to meet the current needs of society through majors designed in collaboration with community stakeholders. We believe that this can best be accomplished through the passage of SB 982. Adding an unnecessary review process will compromise the ability of higher education institutions to respond appropriately to today's world.